Mary Andrews (née Wright), My 8th Great-Grandmother:
Setting the Record Straight

by

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So often I come across examples of how 19th-century authors manipulated and distorted history. Whether their intentions were to control society or not, they effectively did. Those who write the books are the creators of the narrative.

The writers of the books of the past tended to be "upper class," and you can see the bias that comes with that. This has created stigmas and social agendas that quietly put people "in their place." If you were a strong and outspoken woman, you were labeled a "witch." If you were a wealthy and educated man, you were "prominent." If you were a man without wealth but loyal to those who had it, you were called "industrious," but still beneath the elites.

These seemingly harmless adjectives and romanticized retellings strip away the power of the people whose stories they claim to tell.

My ancestor, **Mary Andrews (née Wright)**, is one of those whose story was rewritten.

First off, she was not poor, and she was not ignorant. Mary came from an educated, wealthy family, and the man she married, **Samuel Andrews**, was also a wealthy and educated landowner.

When Mary was about 18, as an outspoken Quaker, she had the courage to travel from Long Island to Boston to protest the hanging of **Mary Dyer**.

The way her story has been told is that Mary was some poor, foolish woman who went to Boston, was accused of witchcraft, but found guilty of Quakerism, and was then banished "into the wilderness." Ummm, no. Distorted story alert!

During my recent book talk about the 1683–84 Pennsylvania witch trial of Margaret Matson, an early Swedish-Finnish settler, we got to discussing Mary, and I realized that when I wrote a genealogical register of this branch of my family in 2022, I wasn't yet as advanced in my research as I am now. I decided to take another look.

I ended up finding the 1661 ***New England Judged*** by George Bishop, the original source that recorded what really happened. And lo and behold, Mary was NEVER accused of witchcraft at all.

At first, I felt a little bummed that the witchcraft story wasn't true, but then I realized how powerful the truth really is.

It appears the false story began in 1843 when author Benjamin Thompson invented it. He also called her "poor and ignorant." She was neither. She was strong, fierce, educated, and from a distinguished family.

Mary had the courage, as an 18-year-old woman, to travel all the way to Boston to protest an execution, knowing she could be tied to a cart, stripped, whipped, or even killed. She was fighting for something she believed was worth dying for... her faith!!!

She was jailed, then "banished upon pain of death," meaning she was ordered to leave the colony and never return. If she did, she would be executed. Imagine that... knowing you could die for your beliefs, yet showing up anyway.

By turning her into a "witch," historians took her power away. She wasn't a victim of superstition. She was a rebel with a cause. I like to think I get my outspokenness from her.

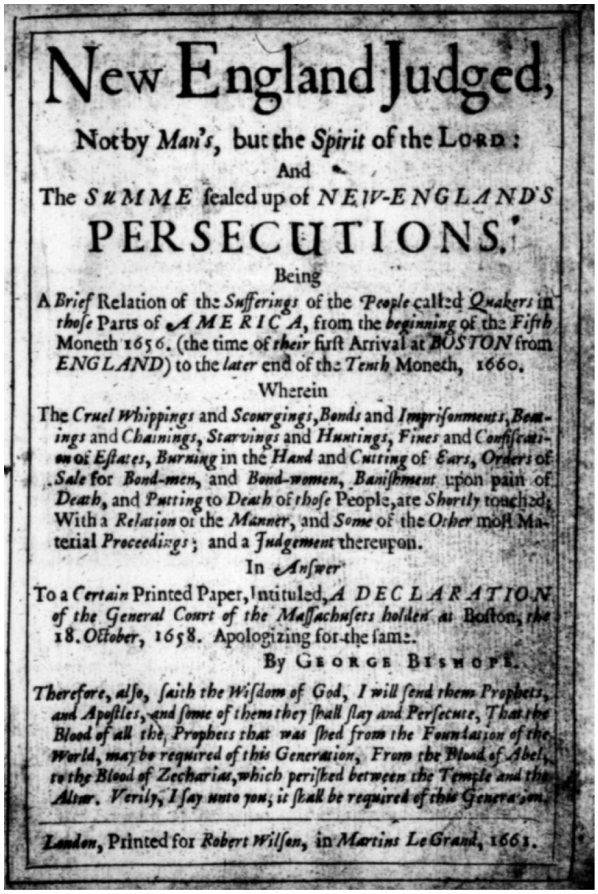
SOURCES:

1. George Bishop, *New-England Judged, Not by Man's, but by the Spirit of the Lord: And the Summe Sealed up of New-England's Persecutions* … (London: Robert Wilson, 1661), 165. https://archive.org/details/bim_early-english-books-1641-1700_new-england-judged-p_bishop-george_1661/page/n163/mode/2up

2. Carla Welsh, *A Registry of the Southern New Jersey Descendants of Peter Wright, One of the First English Settlers of Oyster Bay, Long Island, Including the Headley and Mathis Families, et al., of Little Egg Harbor Township and Tuckerton, New Jersey* (2022). See the first few pages of the registry for genealogical information about Mary and her family. https://archive.org/details/a-registry-of-the-southern-new-jersey-descendants-of-peter-wright/page/n3/mode/2up

3. Howland Delano Perrine, *The Wright Family of Oyster Bay, L.I.: With the Ancestry of and Descent from Peter Wright and Nicholas Wright, 1423-1923* (New York: 1923), 48–52. https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/337740-the-wright-family-of-oyster-bay-l-i-with-the-ancestry-of-and-descent-from-peter-wright-and-nicholas-wright-1423-1923

4. Benjamin Franklin Thompson, *History of Long Island from Its Discovery and Settlement to the Present Time*, vol. 1 (New York: Gould, Banks & Co.: 1843), 270. https://archive.org/details/historyoflongisl01thom_0/page/n285/mode/2up



New England Judged,

Not by *Man's*, but the *Spirit* of the Lord:

And

The *SUMME* sealed up of *NEW-ENGLAND'S*

PERSECUTIONS.

Being

A *Brief* Relation of the *Sufferings* of the *People* called *Quakers* in *those* Parts of *AMERICA*, from the *beginning* of the *Fifth* Moneth 1656. (the time of *their* first Arrival at *BOSTON* from *ENGLAND*) to the *later* end of the *Tenth* Moneth, 1660.

Wherein

The *Cruel Whippings* and *Scourgings*, *Bonds* and *Imprisonments*, *Beatings* and *Chainings*, *Starvings* and *Huntings*, *Fines* and *Confiscation of Estates*, *Burning* in the *Hand* and *Cutting* of *Ears*, *Orders* of *Sale* for *Bond-men*, and *Bond-women*, *Banishment* upon pain of *Death*, and *Putting* to *Death* of *those* People, are *Shortly* touched; With a *Relation* of the *Manner*, and *Some* of the *Other* most Material *Proceedings*; and a *Judgement* thereupon.

In *Answer*

To a *Certain* Printed Paper, Intituled, *A DECLARATION of the General Court of the Massachusets holden at* Boston, *the* 18. *October*, 1658. Apologizing for the same.

By GEORGE BISHOPS.

Therefore, also, saith the Wisdom of God, I will send them Prophets, and Apostles, and some of them they shall slay and Persecute, That the Blood of all the Prophets that was shed from the Foundation of the World, may be required of this Generation, From the Blood of Abel, to the Blood of Zecharias, which perished between the Temple and the Altar. Verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this Generation.

London, Printed for *Robert Wilson*, in *Martins Le Grand*, 1661.

lish that resided there, who endure much servitude for *their* Conscience sake under *them* to enjoy it, and went thither formerly (as I have said) out of the New *English* to Enjoy it, who watch *all* Occasions against *them*, and took this for *One*, and so dealt with *them* through the Example of *you*, and the Instigation (in particular) of *Captain Willet* aforesaid, who were not content to bring *them* under Sufferings, in *New-England*, so as to force *them* to quit the Land to Enjoy their Conscience and Live with Strangers who came out of *England* with *you* to enjoy *their* Conscience, but followed *them* there, and incensed the Strangers against *them*, who before let *them* (and they might have so done to this day) live in peace, which hath produced the Effects aforesaid, for which *you* must Answer to the *Lord* in the Day which is near, wherein *he* will Judge every man according to *his* Works.

Yet a little more, and then I have done with *You*; for I am now coming back again, to *your* own doors, and there sealing up *your* summe in relation to the Sufferings of *your* own Jurisdiction, whom *ye* have caused to suffer since the time of *your* putting those to death, and to the Sufferings in the Colony of *Canetticote*, of which I have spoken.

Several of *Salem* Friends *ye* Committed and have continued them long Prisoners at *Boston*, as *M. Trask*, *John Smith*, *Margaret Smith*, *Edward Wharton* and others; *Robert Harper* also of *Sandwitch*, and *Deborah*, *ye* Committed likewise; And these were in *your* Prison the *Thirtieth* of the *Tenth* Moneth 1660. Several *ye* Banished upon pain of Death, as *VVinlock Christison*, and *VVill. King* of *Salem*, and *Martha Standly*, a Maid belonging to *England*, and *Mary VVrite* of *Oyster Bay* in *Long Island*; who gave her Testimony against *You* for *your* Cruelty in putting *Mary Dier* to Death, whose Blood ye also thirsted after because of it: Amongst which *VVilliam Ledra* is one (upon whom *your* Cruelty hath often Exceeded) *he* was then in *your* hands, as having returned into *your* Jurisdiction after Banishment; yet to try *your* Bloody Law as to Death, whom by a *Chain ye* have fastened to a *Logg*.

Edw. Warton. *Mary Trask.* *John Smith.* *Marg. Smith* of *Salem.* *Robert and Deborah Harper.* of *Sandwitch.* *W. Christison.* *W. King.* *Martha Standly.* *Mary Write.* *W. Ledra.* Banished.

Joseph Nicholson and *his* Wife came in the *Movings* of the *Lord* to Sojourn with *you*; and of *you* to Sojourn amongst *ye* they demanded it, as *they* in right might on as good terms as *you* came

Joseph Nicholson and his Wife.

Bishop's *New England Judged* (1661). Mary's name was recorded as "Mary VVrite of Oyster Bay."

Although prosecutions for witchcraft were at one period not uncommon in some parts of New England, and many hapless victims were sacrificed to this singular delusion, it is believed that charges of this kind were rare in the colony of New York, and no individual, as we can find, was ever executed here, on such an accusation.

But in the year 1660, suspicions fell upon one Mary Wright, a poor and ignorant woman of Oyster Bay, and it became a matter of very grave consideration, that a crime so enormous should undergo a rigid investigation. There being no tribunal in this quarter competent, in the opinion of the people, to hear, try and determine a business of such magnitude, it was resolved to transport the accused to the general court of Massachusetts, where charges of this sort were supposed to be better understood. She was arraigned there soon after, and although the evidence of the guilt of witchcraft failed, she was convicted of quakerism, a crime, in the opinion of her judges, of about equal enormity, and therefore sentenced her to banishment.

Thompson's embellished account of Mary's story from *History of Long Island* (1843).